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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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The development of the Girl Child: A push from youth organizations

As the world's largest international voluntary organization for girls and young women, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) that has been active in both Beijing +5 and Beijing +10 review processes nationally, regionally and internationally, recommits itself to working for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and for the advancement of the human rights of all women, with special attention to the needs of girls and young women. WAGGGS recognizes that girls are a particularly neglected group in many countries' societies: possibly the most neglected group in many developing countries. For many girls, their lives are dominated by the importance of conforming to male-imposed stereotypes. There is very little litigation or help available to promote the rights of the girl child; this is why WAGGGS believes that interaction and cooperation, based on complementarity and partnership between youth organizations, NGOs, governments and international organizations, is needed to achieve the common goals of the Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

L.2: Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls.

WAGGGS has been working in full compliance with strategic objective L2, action 277 d, by providing high-quality, non-formal education programmes that support girls and enable them to acquire knowledge, develop self-esteem and take responsibility for their own lives; and place special focus on programmes to educate women and men, especially parents, on the importance of girls' physical and mental health and well-being, including the elimination of discrimination against girls in food allocation, early marriage, and violence against girls. Over many years, the Guiding system, or 'learning by doing', has been found to be a highly effective method of learning and developing. Girls can join the Movement from the age of five and work in groups or patrols that provide an ideal framework in which the individual can plan and implement projects, undertake responsibilities, experience relationships, reflect and evaluate with others. Furthermore, the peer group plays an extremely important role in the process of acquisition of values by young people. The opinion of peers is particularly influential when a young person has to make choices, especially those which are value based, such as with drugs or sexual relationships.

WAGGGS is committed to continue providing high-quality, non-formal educational programs and encourages national education systems to:

- Eliminate gender bias and discrimination in educational materials and methods;
- Include all forms of education systems, both formal and non-formal;
- Ensure that access to formal and non-formal education is equally available to boys and girls;
- Ensure that national resources are specified for girls' education;
- Provide pre- and in-service gender-sensitization training for teachers;
- Raise parental awareness of the communal and family benefits of female schooling.

Strategic objective L.4. Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training

WAGGGS has been working in full compliance with Strategic objective L.4 action 280, by providing education and skills training to increase girls' opportunities for employment and access to decision-making processes. Through Guiding and Scouting, many girls also learn income-generating skills, such as Rhoa Stove making (energy-efficient cooking) in Liberia, and dressmaking and industrial sewing in El Salvador.

Strategic objective L.5. Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition. Actions to be taken.

WAGGGS has been working actively to implement Strategic objective L.5 action 281 # by establishing peer education and outreach programmes with a view to strengthening individual and collective action to reduce the vulnerability of girls to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. WAGGGS provides education on sensitive issues that girls otherwise may not have the opportunity to understand: WAGGGS runs peer education projects on HIV/ AIDS, adolescent health, promoting healthy lifestyles, food and nutrition, the prevention of adolescent pregnancy. Throughout the world, Girl Guides and Girl Scouts are now earning the WAGGGS AIDS Badge by undertaking activities in three areas: fighting fear, shame and injustice; prevention through change in behaviour; and care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

WAGGGS encourages governments to support action and advocacy that reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV infection and to improve the quality of life for those already living with HIV.

Strategic objective L.8. Promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life

WAGGGS has been working in full compliance with Strategic objective L.8 action 284 b, by promoting the equality and participation of girls in society. One of WAGGGS' fundamental aims is to enable girls to become **decision makers** and give them **leadership skills**. In their patrols, girls are given opportunities for leadership within a safe environment. As they grow older, their opportunities expand and as young women, they are able to take positions of responsibility on their National Board and on the WAGGGS World Board. Girls and young women with decision-making and leadership skills are able to use these skills in their own communities and in their own lives. A study of professional women by the Girl Scouts of America revealed that most of the women surveyed were once Girl Scouts and cited Girl Scouting as having a positive effect on their lives.

All these different factors encourage self-progression and self-awareness, build self-esteem, and develop key life skills so that girls and young women are more confident, assertive, and aware of their rights as equal human beings, in line with *Strategic objective L.5 of the Platform for Action: promote and protect the rights of the girl child and increase awareness of her needs and potential.*

WAGGGS encourages governments to support NGO's and youth organizations that work with girls. Non-governmental youth organizations need adequate resources to help develop in girls and young women many of the attributes

necessary to make them successful individuals and leaders of society, i.e. the development of self-confidence and self-esteem, the management of change in economic society, health and reproductive health education, leadership development, literacy.

WAGGGS will strengthen its efforts to realize the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. There is so much to be done. The task of changing attitudes and eliminating discrimination against the girl child is a huge one. But small steps are being made and some positive changes are happening. WAGGGS is part of the 'Big 7' youth organizations, (including the YWCA, YMCA, WOSM, IAA, IFRCS, IYF). Together, this encompasses 100 million young people. If 100 million young people use peer education to inform just one of their friends about the dangers of discrimination and gender inequality and this carries on, many millions of people will grow up in a fairer society.

In this effort, youth organizations and NGOs need the recognition and support of governments and UN agencies to continue to develop and to support the Girl Child and ensure full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

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Statement submitted by the Legion of Good Will, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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05-22658 (E) 010305

Statement

Regarding the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on "current and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls", the Legion of Good Will (LGW), a Brazilian NGO in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, collects and shares best practices and lessons learned within the United Nations system on strategies of empowerment and advancement of women and girls to disseminate at national and international levels through the LGW's Community centres, day-care centres and schools in Latin America, Europe and in the United States, especially in Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Argentina. As the journalist, radio broadcaster and writer José de Paiva Netto, President of the Legion of Good Will states: "All successful organizations utilize the remarkable presence of spiritualized and enlightened women. Intuition, the competence of the Creator that lies over all creatures, is one of the powerful female instruments. Maybe that's why Voltaire (1694-1778) once had said: 'Tous les raisonnements des hommes ne valent pas un sentiment d'une femme', which means, all men's reasonings are not worth the sentiment of one woman."

Since the beginning of life in society, women were considered to be inferior to men. In the last century, around the 1930s women had no right to vote and very seldom could they drive a car. The Legion of Good Will defends just, political, cultural, scientific, philosophical gender-equality strategies. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status are essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.

As much as women today can lead big corporations, pilot international aircraft, perform operations in hospital surgery centres, take over the labour market, finish college and approach the same rights as men, there still is a long way to go. It is unacceptable that in the twenty-first century, women have still suffered with the results of a millennial culture that makes them subjugated to men. The Legion of Good Will brings to the 49th Commission on the Status of Women its cooperation for the absolute fulfilment of the Beijing Platform of Action, working to facilitate partnership between men and women in all sectors, whether political, cultural, scientific or educational. As the President of the Legion of Good Will addresses gender issues, it is frequently noted that his vision about the topic is the saying "To value the Woman means to dignify the Man". LGW accordingly reinforces the important role of women in the social arena. It believes that a woman has the right to become president of a country, a religious leader, a CEO, a captain of aircraft and transatlantic ships; she has the right to become a doctor, an engineer, a teacher, and thus she can actively act in all ranks of society. At work, there is a fair concept of value among men and women: that of competence (see Paiva Netto, *Reflections and Thoughts*, 1987).

As a result of the numerous financial and psychological problems experienced by women as they seek to bring a healthy pregnancy to term and decently raise their children, the LGW has created several programmes to minimize this emergent situation in its Community and Educational Centers, among them the programme Woman BEING and Baby-Citizen. This programme develops several integrated

actions for all family members, independent of their ages. The main objective of the programme is to rescue human and professional self-esteem, intellectually and emotionally. A team of professional volunteers conducts activities to improve the quality of life of those people as a whole, combining ethics and spirituality with material values, aiming at the true exercise of citizenship.

One of the LGW's activities in partnership with the private sector, government departments and volunteer support in order to effectively generate results is to enrich the quality of life of the most underprivileged women in society through educational conferences, beauty classes, workshops and occupational courses to improve family financial resources, orientation in the area of health to facilitate information on outpatient hospital admittance procedures, juridical and psychological help. Emphasis is given to the project Baby-Citizen to strengthen the relationship between mother and child, to encourage full prenatal care, to rescue the meaning of pregnancy and combat child and mother malnutrition.

Women start attending the programme's practices after their third month of pregnancy. During all pregnancy stages they are helped to prepare the unborn's trousseau and undergo clinical exams; they receive complimentary food items, as well as speech therapy, nursing assistance and music therapy assistance for themselves and their families. Women attend workshops about caring for the unborn, alternate foods, breastfeeding, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases, breast and cervical cancer etc. The same importance is given to the motivation of praying together as a family.

The practices continue until the baby turns one year of age. During this year, mothers come in groups to the workshops. They are advised about infant malnutrition, nutrition, day-care centres, sanitation and baby oral health. Another activity to guarantee women's rights are the Legion of Good Will's day-care centres and schools that prepare children to achieve their full potential as citizens. Thousands of children are annually taken from social risk situations and are prepared so that they can face labour market competition. Schools are composed of modern research centres, physics, chemistry, biology and computer laboratories, three gymnasiums and a big recreation area.

In this context, the day-care centres have a preponderant role because the Legion involves children from their earliest years in a learning process with a solid basis. These children will turn out to be adults prepared for life, complete human beings, with brains and hearts connected. The Ecumenical Citizen Pedagogy is the differential issue of these educational complexes. It introduces the universal values of Spirituality, an accurate taste for Solidarity practices in students' characters. It enables individuals to contribute to the non-stop improvement of the social environment. The motto that leads activities of the LGW's educational centres is summarized as: "Here we study to form mind and heart".

To support women and girls who stand at social risk, since the 1980s the Legion has made schools and Educational Community Centers available throughout Brazil and abroad. In those centres, the LGW offers free-of-charge early education, elementary, junior high school education, occupational courses to thousands of children and youth. As an example, we have the "LGW Educational, Cultural and Community Center" in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the "José de Paiva Netto Institute" in São Paulo, "Alziro Zarur Home and Park" in Glorinha, Rio Grande do Sul, and many other modern occupational school centres in Brazil. The Ecumenical Citizen

Pedagogy is applied to LGW's educational centres. It conciliates intellect and feeling under the light of ecumenical spirituality. It contributes to solutions for the greatest human conflicts and guarantees, according to the thematic issues, women's and girl's equal participation in gender equality.

As the President of the Legion, journalist Paiva Netto states:

"Discord, radicalism, hostilities of all kinds must be kept away from the religious, philosophical, political, scientific, economic, artistic and sport debates and proposals, among others, for Man or Woman is born on Earth to live in society.

"Conciliating is, therefore, our great calling since we are based on the wide Ecumenical experience of the Legion of Good Will (LGW). Brazil and the world need to immediately live an Unrestricted Ecumenism, based on the deepest values of the Spirit. Great is the nation and wise is the ruler that reconciles the values of the components of both genres, of every race, belief, political conviction. They are the builders of true progress.

"The Legion of Good Will has assumed serious social commitments since its honoured and greatly missed founder, Alziro Zarur (1914-1979), under divine inspiration, spread the roots of this Organization in Brazilian soil. LGW struggles to build a society where all Human Beings are really equal in their rights, and whose social foundation, no matter how admirable and recognized it is, does not become a source of prejudice against citizens' rights and freedoms — a society in which only God and His Laws of Love and Justice can inspire responsibilities for individual freedom as well as ensure freedom for all.

"I speak about the Supreme Creator who is love, not about those who wish to make Him an odious tool of fanaticism, prejudice and hatred. Thus, the real virtue will be the one built upon people themselves, in the honest occupation of their days, in the administration of their goods, in their respect towards others, in the beautiful and instigating adventure of life. A nation composed by people like these will always be great and inviolable.

"This is a time of union of everybody who believes in the regeneration of the social body, having the Spirit of the Human Being as its principle. And what do we see around the Planet other than the establishment of injustice? Who is guilty? The street gangs? The greedy or the corrupters? The explorer or the rebellious people? No! The guilty are those who consider themselves good, honest, capable, in other words, the ones who are accommodated and satisfy themselves on claiming human rights for their own benefit, therefore forgetting to more audaciously and promptly fulfil their social, moral and spiritual duties. When the territory is not defended by the good, the bad make 'just' the victory of injustice."

In order to ensure forward-looking strategies for the Beijing Platform of Action for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, Governments and Civil Society should maximize strategies to rescue the quality of public and family education, all based upon the adoption of ecumenical and spiritual values.

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Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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05-22664 (E) 010305

Statement

Who is woman? Daughter, mother, wife, patriot, policy maker, sister, thinker, worker? The challenge of this changing world asks this question and every woman is called upon to answer.

We young people of different nations, cultures, religions, ethnicities believe that every person is endowed with an intrinsic and inalienable dignity from conception throughout our natural lives. This dignity is inviolable and does not change regardless of the circumstances of one's life. It is the basis for human rights.

We believe that the freedom of the human person is most fully and rightly lived in the gift of ourselves to others. In the act of giving of one's self, the human person answers the question, "Who am I?" through the experience of love.

Equal in dignity, and in a way that is complementary to man, woman is unique in her capacity for love and so can experience freedom in a radical way through her gift of self.

In motherhood, which is a continual invitation to give of one's self, woman develops society through the transmission of life.

Woman recalls to humankind its humanity in a profound recognition of the dignity of each person. Woman is the architect of authentic peace from the most basic cell of society to the highest levels of policy and decision-making, constructing conditions in which persons are given the chance to live in accordance with their dignity.

The talents of woman foster and preserve the beauty of each culture. When woman exercises a key role in building, designing and protecting societies, her participation enriches and sustains the culture for herself, her family and community and for all generations to follow.

Through her gift of self, every aspect of woman's life is enriched and transformed and society in turn is transformed on every level.

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Statement submitted by: Coalition against Trafficking in Women, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Coordination francaise du lobby européen des femmes, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Council of Jewish Women, Mouvement pour l'abolition de la prostitution et de la pornographie et de toutes formes de violences sexuelles et discriminations sexists, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Soroptimist International, VIVAT International, World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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05-22579 (E) 240205

Statement

We, NGOs working toward the elimination of male violence against women and realization of gender equality, reaffirm the message in the Beijing Declaration, adopted by the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995 that "violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace."

Violence against women impacts women's ability to enjoy equality and human rights. Sexual violence and exploitation continue to be among the most devastating forms of violence experienced by women and girls of all ages, and indeed have proliferated as a result of increased globalization and use of Internet technologies.

Widespread violence against women

Over the past decade, increased globalization has often led to prioritizing profit at the expense of human rights and gender equality. Governments have contributed to this crisis by raising revenue through policies effectively normalizing and, in some places, even legalizing sexual violence and exploitation such as prostitution and pornography. The harms of sexual violence to individual women and communities that result from trafficking and sex tourism have nearly become invisible as women's and girls' bodies and sexuality have been reduced to commodities. The majority of the victims of trafficking are women and girls and most are trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation.

Given its devastating and far-reaching impact on women and their communities, systematic rape is used as a weapon of war. In conflict areas, military forces launch attacks against the bodies of civilian women and girls. Refugees fleeing situations of armed conflict are raped in and around camps meant to protect them from further violence. Humanitarian workers and peacekeeping forces abuse their position of power vis-à-vis the local populations to sexually exploit women in war-torn areas.

Impact of Violence Against Women

Throughout the world, women and girls are confronted with sexual violence in their homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Sexual violence and its aftermath often prevent women from becoming equal participants in government, the workforce, and society. The economic impact and social stigmatization of sexual abuse are serious barriers to women's equality. A significant number of victims of sexual assault lose their jobs or are forced to quit. Those who speak up against sexual abuse in the workplace often face discrimination by employers. Even though one third of adolescent girls report that their first sexual experience was forced, rape and sexual assault are rarely prosecuted.[1] When criminal justice systems address rape, there usually is more scrutiny and blame put on the victim than the perpetrator. In some parts of the world, rape victims themselves are prosecuted. Even where rape victims are not criminalized, the social stigma of being identified as a victim of sexual abuse can lead to isolation or further violence or abuse by families and communities.

The effect of sexual abuse on the health of women around the world is enormous. Sexual violence is one of the leading factors of the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls. UNAIDS, UNFPA, and UNIFEM have identified gender inequality as the core cause of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, citing their inability to exercise control over their bodies and their lives. Male violence and privilege prevent women and girls from making their own decisions with regard to their sexual health. According to the World Health Organization, women who have experienced physical or sexual abuse in childhood or adulthood experience more physical and psychological health problems and are more likely to be exposed to further behaviors that endanger their health than women who have not been abused. Those who experience both physical and sexual abuse are at higher risk of developing health problems generally than those who experience physical violence alone. The impact over time of multiple episodes of abuse appears to be cumulative, increasing the health consequences for the victim. The psychological effects of sexual abuse may leave women in a constant state of fear and helplessness and instill in them a feeling that their lives are worthless and meaningless.

[1] World Health Organization, *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002).

The objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action cannot be achieved while sexual violence is pervasive throughout all societies.

Responses to Violence Against Women

During the past decade, there have been important changes in states' recognition of sexual violence and attempts to eradicate it. For instance, on the international level, states have passed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, a wide-ranging international agreement to address the crimes and human rights violations involved in the trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Protocol is a significant step in addressing sexual violence in that it specifically addresses the trade in human beings for purposes of the exploitation of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation. In 2004, the UN system added the position of Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, to give further focus to trafficking in women and girls, the majority of victims in trafficking in persons. Regional efforts have likewise addressed trafficking, including the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

Another important international development was the inclusion of gender violence as among the crimes against humanity subject to the jurisdiction of international criminal tribunals, finally addressing sexual assault in armed conflict, a crime that had largely been ignored. Likewise, the UN's adoption of a Code of Conduct for its staff, including humanitarian aid workers, which includes a prohibition of sexual exploitation, addresses the need to protect women and girls from sexual exploitation and hold perpetrators of violence accountable, particularly following conflict and humanitarian crises.

States such as the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, and Sweden, have created legislation aimed at ending the sexual exploitation of women and girls. Laws attempting to stem the tide of trafficking in persons for purposes of sexual exploitation and the practice of sex tourism have been passed, including criminalization of perpetrators and immigration remedies for victims. Militaries are beginning to police sexual exploitation of women by their troops, both against female soldiers and civilians.

Many states have begun to address inequalities in their laws and introduce new legislation to address the problem of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, in the home and workplace. During the past decade, new domestic violence legislation has been implemented by several states to address violence against women within the family and in the home. Recognition of the problem of domestic violence has led several states to eliminate marital rape exemptions in the penal laws and to fund programs for women and their children to assist them in gaining safety from abuse in their homes.

Recommendations

States must honor their commitment to eradicate violence against women, particularly sexual violence and exploitation, by focusing on implementation. We appeal for action in the following areas:

- Ratifying and implementing international and regional conventions that seek to eliminate violence against women, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and its Optional Protocol; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others; the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;

- Implementing the policies recommended by the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery regarding sexual exploitation and gender-based violence;

- Implementing and enforcing the guidelines established by the Secretary-General's Bulletin on "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse"[2];

- Training and accountability of institutional players at all levels, including police, judges, prosecutors and other community leaders to recognize exploited women and girls as crime victims, not as immoral or criminal;

- Strengthening laws and policies to assist victims of domestic violence, including addressing crimes of rape and sexual abuse;

- Criminalizing the perpetrators of all crimes of sexual exploitation, including buyers and procurers of prostituted and trafficked women and girls;

- Reforming laws on sentencing and admissibility of evidence in rape cases to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable;

- Creating economic programs for women at risk of being trafficked and sexually exploited and raising awareness about the danger of trafficking;

- Adopting immigration remedies for victims of sexual violence and exploitation, including asylum and lawful residency;

- Supporting educational programs addressing the prevention of sexual violence in the broader context of gender equality, including education and empowerment for women and girls, and education on the harms of sexual violence and sexual stereotypes for men and boys;

- Rejecting the legalization or normalization of sexual violence or the lack of prosecution or enforcement of laws that attempt to hold perpetrators accountable;

- Recognizing the role of the media and the Internet in promoting sexual violence and adopting measures to combat the growing sexualization of women and girls and abuse of women and girls in the production and consumption of pornography.

A decade ago in Beijing, the global community recognized that violence against women is an obstacle to gender equality. Law and policy-makers, educators, and activists have worked hard to improve states' response to this issue, but there is much more work left to be done. Global markets profiting from exploitation of women and girls add new challenges to addressing old problems of sexual abuse. The global community must now stem the tide of a greater sense of acceptability and inevitability of sexual violence and recommit itself to the elimination of violence against women in all its forms.

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[2] ST/SGB/2003/13.

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Statement presented by Education International, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and Public Services International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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WORKING WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY – FROM MARGINALIZATION TO EMPOWERMENT

The past decade has seen some significant achievements in various parts of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), but on balance women remain deeply concerned about the many obstacles which continue to hamper the full exercise of their rights, and the full achievement of gender equality. This means that an ambitious agenda still lies ahead; and that this is no time for reneging on the promises made in Beijing. We call upon governments to take the opportunity of this year's review and appraisal of the BPfA to strongly renew their commitments, to reaffirm the Platform and their resolve to intensify efforts to achieve full equality between women and men in all spheres of life.

As trade unionists representing some 60 million working women worldwide, we draw the attention of governments in particular to the strategic objectives of Section F of the BPfA, and to their commitments aimed at ensuring that women enjoy their fair share of the benefits of growth in the global economy through policies to "promote women's economic rights and independence, including equal access to resources, employment, training, markets, and trade, elimination of all forms of employment discrimination, and harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men." We conclude that unfortunately current economic policies are failing working women. We analyze the systemic causes of this failure, and put forward a set of concrete recommendations aimed at turning the situation around.

Globalization and its neoliberal agenda of flexible labour markets, privatization of public services, promotion of Export Processing Zones (EPZs), and increasing pressures to become migrant labourers or informal economy workers, have all worked in tandem to undermine women's rights, and to marginalize them in the global economy. Five hundred and fifty million people in the world today are classified as the working poor, earning less than USD $1 per day. Of this figure, 330 million, or 60% are women. In addition, 77.8 million women are unemployed, with the female unemployment rate higher than the male for the world as a whole. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) concludes that decent jobs need to be created for 400 million women currently filling the ranks of the working poor and the unemployed, if the increasing trend of the feminization of poverty is to be reversed. Such a decent work agenda must also focus specifically on the 35.8 million young women (aged 15-24) unable to find employment, again a figure reflecting higher unemployment rates among young women than among young men in most parts of the world.

Even though women have benefited from new jobs, a large portion of the 1.1 billion working women find themselves concentrated in low-skill, undervalued, insecure jobs with little or no social protection, and where they are paid between 12 and 60% less than men. Frequently, they experience sexual harassment in the workplace, suffer more and longer unemployment, and continue to bear the largest burden of family responsibilities. Moreover, the neoliberal economic policies of deregulation, privatization and cuts in essential public expenditures have served to shift the costs of essential service provision from the State to households. This creates even greater hardships for women.

In addition to gender-based segregation in some occupations and workplaces, pay inequity remains a persistent problem in industrialized countries and in the formal sectors of developing countries. The increasing feminization of poverty in the informal and agricultural sectors of developing countries is another cause for great concern. Precarious, low-paid, unprotected work in the informal economy is the growing lot of working women in many countries, both of the global north and the south. Migration for employment is yet another trend associated with globalization, and here women constitute about 40% of the world's migrants. Low pay is often the main cause of increased migration of women workers in the health sector, for example, in Central and Eastern European countries. Migrant women with low skills

face particularly formidable challenges, finding themselves in exploited domestic work or the entertainment sector, and increasingly trafficked, becoming objects of gender-based violence at the workplace.

Women from ethnic minorities face both gender and racial discrimination, while young women are finding themselves disadvantaged in relation to men, when it comes to finding decent work. Clearly, the rules of economic and trade liberalization are creating an increasingly volatile employment market. This can be highlighted by the plight of hundreds of thousands of women workers in the textile sector in Asia, threatened with job losses as a result of the dismantling of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) in January 2005, which provided guaranteed quotas for textile exports to Europe and the USA. Unfortunately, efforts at union organizing in the face of such challenges, expose women to threats of intimidation, dismissals, victimization and even violence from unscrupulous employers. This is particularly the case in some EPZs. Women constitute about 80% of the 50 million-strong workforce in these zones, which are multiplying around the world. They provide low-cost, union-free locations which serve the interests of multinational companies determined to reap maximum profits from globalization.

The current neoliberal policies are clearly undermining policies in the social sector, such as public health, so indispensable for combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and policies for achieving universal education with parity. Public services provision remains indispensable to ensuring equality, and must be seen as an instrument of social cohesion.

Sound education policies remain paramount for achieving gender equality and eradicating poverty. In the Dakar Framework for Action, which was set by countries in 2000 at the World Education Forum, governments promised to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. We now know that this goal will not be realised, but women from the education trade unions will continue demanding the full implementation of the Dakar Framework for Action, and also the Millennium Goals related to education, as well as the allocation of adequate human and financial resources for quality public education for all.

Union women have not hesitated to respond to the innumerable challenges of gender discrimination and injustice in the world of work. They have been proactive within the civil society struggle to hold their governments accountable to the commitments they made in Beijing. Equally important, union women have been transforming the structures, method of work and culture of the trade unions, and spearheading various campaigns. These have focused on organizing, giving special attention to the youth and to workers in EPZs and the informal economy, and to pay equity. Increasingly, women are participating in union work across the board, including at the highest levels of union leadership. Through them, unions are changing their profile, reflecting better the diversity in the world of work. They are, thus, responding more effectively to the needs and concerns of all workers, women and men.

With respect to attaining the MDGs, it is clear that serious obstacles remain, and that if these are not overcome through bold policies on poverty eradication and decent work, 2015 will be a year for commiseration on the continuing plight of millions of poor working women unable to sustain themselves and their families on less than $1 a day. Bold policies are needed to fulfill the commitments of the BPfA and the MDGs, and for the effective empowerment of women. We recommend the following:

- The systematic incorporation of the principles of the BPfA and the Millennium Declaration in all aspects of economic, trade and employment policies at national and global levels, and the establishment of a comprehensive system to monitor implementation.
- The full adoption at the national level of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, with a definite focus on gender equality and trade union rights.
- Continuing campaigns of the union movement to eliminate gender discrimination and pay inequity.

- Continuing campaigns of the union movement to ensure effective organizing of women workers, including organizing support to women workers in the informal sector and EPZs.
- Intensifying campaigns at national, regional and international levels for the ratification and full implementation of the Conventions enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including Conventions 100 (Equal Remuneration) and 111 (Discrimination), as well as Conventions 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities), 175 (Part-Time Work), 177 (Home Work), and 183 on Maternity Protection, and for effective follow-up to the Conclusions of the ILO Discussion on Decent Work and the Informal economy (2002), and to the ILO Conference Resolution on gender equality, pay equity, and maternity protection (2004). This is in keeping with the Resolution "Unions For Women, Women for Unions " adopted by the ICFTU's 18th World Congress (December, 2004).
- Adoption of a proactive approach by the ILO to ensure that laws prohibiting union organizing in certain sectors such as EPZs are eliminated.
- Governments must ensure adequate funding for quality public services as fundamental to achieving gender equality, and must provide equal access to these services. Any changes in the modalities for provision should be subject to gender impact assessments.
- Governments must introduce measures to address the persistent gender wage gap, including the extension of collective bargaining to all of the public sector, and the introduction of a national living wage.
- Governments must fulfill the commitments made in the Dakar Framework of Action, by intensifying efforts to support gender parity and gender equality goals in the fields of education and training, and to provide resources for Quality Public Education for All.
- Governments must adopt policies to ensure that women and girls (regardless of national or ethnic origin, economic or social position, migrant status, disability, or any other characteristic or condition) will have access to all levels of a human rights-based education, an education that should include sex education free from prejudices, and respectful of their reproductive health and rights.
- Prevention and treatment programmes to combat HIV/AIDS must address the gender dimensions linked to gender-based coercion, harassment and violence, including at the workplace. Strategies must encompass prevention through the education system with teacher training and gender-sensitive curricula, and workplace approaches, based on the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work.
- Governments must commit to developing policies and action plans that will bring about the institutional changes in the workplace and the home that will truly foster gender equity and an equitable sharing of family responsibilities.

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Statement submitted by Equality Now, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-22670 (E) 010305

Statement

Ten years ago, governments pledged in the Beijing Platform for Action to "revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex." In 1999, Equality Now published a representative sampling of explicitly discriminatory laws from 45 countries. The following year, the Outcome Document of the Special Session of the General Assembly convened to review the Platform for Action established a target date of 2005 for revocation of discriminatory laws. That date is now upon us, yet many explicitly discriminatory laws remain in force.

We are pleased to report that as of January 2005 a number of countries — 14 of 45 — have effectively repealed or amended the discriminatory laws highlighted in Equality Now's 1999 report so as to eliminate the sex discrimination. These countries are the Bahamas, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, France, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Serbia and Montenegro, Switzerland, Turkey, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Such reforms set the example for moving from words to action. However, the great majority of laws highlighted remain in force and are included, together with further examples of discriminatory laws from other countries, in Equality Now's updated report, *Words and Deeds—Holding Governments Accountable in the Beijing +10 Review Process* (at www.equalitynow.org). Many more exist around the world.

A mechanism is urgently needed to carry forward the process of eliminating legalized discrimination against women. The establishment by the CSW of a Special Rapporteur on Laws that Discriminate Against Women would support and facilitate the continued implementation of the commitment made in the Beijing Platform for Action to revoke these laws. A Special Rapporteur reporting annually to the CSW could accomplish this task in an innovative manner that builds on, and breathes new life into, the Platform for Action. Laws that discriminate against women are a thematic concern well suited for a CSW Special Rapporteur. A Special Rapporteur would allow CSW to highlight ways in which member states have used law reform effectively to counter legal

discrimination against women and would be able to engage in a dialogue with States to promote exchange of information among member States with similar concerns. The Special Rapporteur's work would draw from and supplement the work of CEDAW, as does the Platform for Action.

The appointment of a Special Rapporteur is entirely within the CSW's mandate. In 1968, CSW appointed a Special Rapporteur on the Status of Women and Family Planning who undertook research culminating in a Final Report submitted to the CSW. CSW, like the Commission on Human Rights, should renew its use of this important mechanism, in carrying out its mandate to monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action. Equality Now and Amnesty International have co-convened a coalition of international, regional, and national organizations in Bangladesh, Egypt, Nepal, Peru, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the United States that support the creation of a Special Rapporteur on Laws that Discriminate Against Women.

We urge the Commission to demonstrate its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by calling on all States to fulfill their undertaking to eliminate discriminatory laws without further delay.

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Statement presented by the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-22676 (E) 020305

Statement

As a member of the community of peoples that stand for justice, the YMCA is concerned about the current status of women, especially young women and girls, who are being excluded from exercising their full political, economic, cultural and social rights.

In its review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and based on its experience as a worldwide grass-roots organisation, the YMCA continues to see injustices against women, despite government commitments. The YMCA considers that the Beijing + 10 Review can only be seen in the context of examining the global forces which are affecting women and impede the achievement of the Platform, including militarism, fundamentalisms and globalisation.

The YMCA considers that a chief obstacle to fulfilling the twelve critical areas of the Platform for Action is the predominance of the neoliberal model which accords priority to economic growth over people's welfare, through the implementation of economic policies that have devastating consequences for women.

The YMCA stresses that women's perspectives should be incorporated in all the areas of global and regional policy of the United Nations and multilateral institutions; otherwise, the gender impacts of policy choices will continue to be ignored. It is also important to integrate a gender perspective in the implementation and review of the Millennium Declaration.

The YMCA further recognises that urgent action is needed to obtain commitments from governments and the United Nations to more targeted and time-bound indicators and measurable goals for the implementation of the Beijing Platform, as well as adequate resources and technical support. The YMCA ratifies its support to the NGO Committee on the Status of Women position that called for no renegotiation of the agreed text of the Beijing Platform for Action.

In relation to the challenges for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, the YMCA recognises that urgent action is needed to ensure that:

- the current patriarchal system is changed through educating boys and men that gender inequalities are an abuse of human rights and through mobilising boys and men to advance women's rights and gender justice

- mechanisms are set in place to increase participation and access for young women in United Nations processes

- laws recognising women's equal rights and opportunities are created and, where they already exist, are enforced.

The YMCA is mobilising both men and women members, young and adult, at grass-roots, national and international levels to address these issues and welcomes further efforts to develop practical tools for implementation.

The YMCA also welcomes cooperation among women's organisations, NGOs, UN bodies and governments in addressing gender inequalities and achieving gender justice.

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Statement submitted by Womankind Worldwide, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-22682 (E) 020305

Statement

The work of Womankind Worldwide[1] and the experiences of our partners over the years have reaffirmed our belief that there can be no sustainable development or peace and security without a commitment to gender equality and the promotion and protection of women's human rights.

Women everywhere are making important contributions to the development of their communities and their countries, but continue to be excluded from the processes and, consequently, the gains of development. The MDGs will merely serve to reinforce this, unless they are placed within a human rights framework and the centrality of a women's human rights approach to development is emphasised.[2]

The full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other human rights instruments are essential for advancing the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration and achieving the MDGs. They can also act as useful practical tools to guide and strengthen national-level MDG processes.[3]

We must use the Beijing +10 Review and the Millennium Review as opportunities to emphasise this interdependence. Building a bridge between these two reviews will help the women's movement ensure that the global political momentum generated by the MDGs is directed towards the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights.

We recommend that all stakeholders:

- Reframe the MDGs as human rights obligations using CEDAW, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) as a framework
- Acknowledge the cross-cutting nature of gender equality and the empowerment of women in global and national-level monitoring and implementation of the MDGs and ensure that national targets, indicators and strategies to meet the MDGs are, as a minimum requirement, compliant with and complementary to CEDAW, the BPFA and national gender equality instruments
- Work together to encourage ownership of the MDG process in the global North and South and to improve efforts to monitor and report on achievements and failures in integrating a gender perspective in the practical implementation of the Goals
- Integrate a gender and women's human rights perspective in the implementation and review of the Millennium Declaration, including a review of all of the commitments made, in particular the commitments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement CEDAW

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[1] See www.womankind.org.uk to find out more about our work.

[2] "Linking women's human rights and the MDGs: an agenda for 2005" Genevieve Renard Painter, commissioned by the UK Gender and Development Network, p. 2. For further information on the Gender and Development Network, please visit www.gadnetwork.org.uk.

[3] See "Out of the Margins: The MDGs Through a CEDAW Lends", Ceri Hayes, for WOMANKIND Worldwide, for practical examples of how CEDAW can be used to strengthen the implementation of the MDGs. Some countries are already using tools such as CEDAW and national gender equality instruments in this way. See, for example, the Albania National Report on Progress Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, 2004.

- Make full use of other instruments and mechanisms, such as the official reporting process for CEDAW, to strengthen the links between women's human rights and the MDGs and to monitor progress made by Member States
- Earmark resources to ensure these recommendations are implemented.

We recommend that the CSW adopt and take forward these recommendations to ensure that the linkages between the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration are duly taken into account.

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Statement submitted by World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-22688 (E) 030305

Statement

The Beijing Platform for Action is a landmark document that spells out the agenda for women's empowerment. It is aimed at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. It draws attention to the different issues and concerns that women around the world confront and presents strategies on how to address these issues and concerns. Women media activists from different parts of the world consider it especially significant, as it is the first official UN document that recognized media as a critical area of concern. It recognized women and media issues as one area of particular urgency that stands out as a priority for action.

During the past decade, we have seen a number of advances in women's access to and participation in media. In some parts of the world, there have also been improvements in the way women are covered and portrayed in the media. Advances in media technology have also facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, and audience attitudes and behavior.

Evidently, the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women.

However, while more women are involved in careers in the media industry, few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media persists as illustrated by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organizations.

The continued projection of negative and demeaning women's images in different types of media - electronic, print, visual and audio must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to national and social development. Moreover, violent and pornographic media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society. Programming that reinforces women's traditional roles can be equally limiting. The worldwide trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women primarily as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately.

What we need is the kind of media that would provide women the greatest access and encourage their widest participation. What is crucial is media that would enhance women's participation and contribution to the promotion of social justice. Community media, with its participative structures and processes, has a potential to ensure women's access to and participation in the media. Since it is not driven by profit and is managed by people in the community, it is not governed by the same set of rules and standards that mainstream media observe in employing women. In community media, the value base is guided by principles of participation and community building, thereby providing opportunities to women at the community level, who fall outside the parameters set by mainstream media organizations. Essentially, community radio provides that crucial balance to the powerful media conglomerates that operate on the principle that there is less profit in media productions that promote and protect the interests of the people.

At the Asia-Pacific High Level Meeting to Review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held in Bangkok from 7 to 10 September 2004, the importance of community and independent media efforts in advancing women's status was underscored. The Bangkok Communiqué, the official document signed by 44 states members and associate members of the UN Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific, stated

that "Supporting and recognizing community and independent media to counter the negative and stereotypical portrayal of women and girls" is one of the challenges that the region needs to address.

We call on the delegates of the 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women to follow through on this recommendation coming from the Asia-Pacific region. In the last decade, we have seen an enormous growth in the community and independent media sector. Thousands of community radio stations have been established in different parts of the world –particularly in the South. Independent media groups continue to be established everywhere. We urge the delegates to support community and independent media that women's organizations from across the world use to put forward their agenda and promote their advancement.

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Statement presented by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-22694 (E) 020305

Statement

On the occasion of the 10-year Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) takes this opportunity to express its unequivocal support for the Platform and its full implementation. Since its inception in 1915, WILPF has worked to prevent armed conflicts and to establish the conditions for sustainable peace on a global scale. As an NGO with consultative status, WILPF has vigorously participated in all of the United Nations-sponsored World Conferences on Women. In light of its historical work, WILPF continues to affirm the struggle for full recognition and fulfillment of women's human rights, including economic, social and sexual rights.

WILPF understands that the perpetration of violence against women falls along a continuum. Economic, sexual and political violence against women is retaught from generation to generation in all countries in a paradigm of societal power held and created to benefit boys and men. We call upon States to recognize that unequal economic stakeholding, including unequal ownership and control of land, credit and resources, not only constitutes violence in and of itself, but also allows men and boys to perpetrate violence against women and girls who are economically dependent upon them. This dynamic is exacerbated by armed conflict and growing religious fundamentalism, and most impacts marginalized women, including widows, indigenous and minority women, who are often at risk of violence perpetrated by paternalistic or misogynist State or non-State actors.

In the 1985 Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, participating States recognized: "Peace cannot be realized under conditions of economic and sexual inequality, denial of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, deliberate exploitation of large sectors of the population, unequal development of countries, and exploitative economic relations."

The Beijing Declaration, adopted 10 years later, reiterated that "women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace," the outcomes envisioned by the Beijing Platform for Action and the U.N. Decade for Women.

WILPF applauds the steps taken by the United Nations toward realizing this vision. In particular, we take pleasure in noting the coming into force of the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers in 2003, the designation of the years 2001-2010 as the U.N. Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, the establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI); the convening of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly, entitled Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century, and the UN Security Council's adoption of UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in October 2000. We celebrate the work of UN entities to integrate a gender perspective in their work, including that on peace and security and the Millennium Development Goals, and encourage further gender mainstreaming through the development and implementation of comprehensive gender action plans. We expect the integration of a gender perspective during the assessment of the Millennium Development Goals during the Millennium Summit later this year.

We also call on Member States to integrate a gender perspective into the work of all ministries at the national level. WILPF recognizes the achievements of national governments, such as Namibia, South Africa and Rwanda, that have adopted innovative institutional mechanisms, such as gender budgeting and quota systems for candidate lists, to further all women's enjoyment of their human rights and quicken the realization of women's full equality.

WILPF calls on Member States to invest in human security and the construction of peace, and to end impunity enjoyed by war profiteers, organized crime syndicates and those who traffick and purchase persons. We call on national governments, including those that act as donors and mediators, to make use of the strategic objectives and actions enumerated in the critical area of concern of the Platform, entitled Women and armed conflict, and UNSCR 1325 as a means of supporting the realization of women's rights in all governmental programs and processes.

WILPF Sections have observed how the economic policies of privatization and free trade agreements continue to impoverish the large majority of the world's peoples, to displace women, men, girls and boys from or within their countries and to compromise the sustainability of the Earth's resources. We call on the United Nations, Member States, regional bodies and international financial institutions to seek institutional collaboration to formulate economic policies in a human rights framework.

WILPF does not support the Explanation of Position that the United States (US) government has put forward at the regional meetings in preparation for the Review and Appraisal of the BPFA or any national legislative action that undermines human security, including women's economic security and sexual autonomy. We call on the United States to reaffirm and implement the BPFA. Further, WILPF calls on the United States to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. WILPF welcomes attempts by Member States to hold the US government accountable to its international commitments, including those that the US has made through its ratification of the Convention on Torture, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

As WILPF nears the 90th anniversary of its birth at The Hague, we continue to work for the achievement of conditions necessary for ongoing collaborative efforts among actors from civil society, governments, international financial institutions and the United Nations to work towards collective human security, and away from militarism and economic violence. In this spirit, we look forward to continuing to work with our sisters and brothers around the world to eradicate all forms of discrimination and social structures resulting in women's subordination, and to create the conditions for a healthy planet and sustainable peace.

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Statement presented by New Japan Women's Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-22700 (E) 030305

Statement

The forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to conduct the ten-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action is being held in the 60th year after the end of World War II, the foundation of the United Nations and the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki where atomic bombs were used against humanity for the first time in history.

As a women's organization of the A-bombed Japan, the New Japan Women's Association (NJWA) has placed the task of achieving a peaceful world without nuclear weapons at the top of its agenda since its foundation. Of the 6,000 signatures of Japanese people in support of the appeal for the elimination of nuclear weapons, which were submitted to the United Nations in 2000, NJWA collected 1,000.

To make the 60th year of the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki a turning point for a world without nuclear weapons and war, where the peace-related principles of the United Nations Charter are respected, a signature campaign is being promoted internationally in support of the appeal, "Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, Now — Let there be no more Hiroshimas and no more Nagasakis". It calls on the governments of nuclear weapons States to neither use, threaten to use nor develop nuclear weapons, and to take immediate steps for their abolition; and on the governments of all countries to take action for the conclusion of an international treaty for the abolition of nuclear weapons. NJWA is taking an active part in this campaign.

NJWA urges governments to accelerate efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, stop spending resources in military spending, and work for comprehensive disarmament. In addition to the increased participation of women and inclusion of gender perspectives in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding processes, it is necessary to establish rules for peace based on the United Nations Charter, with the view of preventing conflicts and wars from occurring in the first place. In this regard, we underline the importance of the Government of Japan to observe the Constitution that renounces war in its article 9, and of governments of other countries to insert in their constitutions a war-renouncing clause similar to ours, as proposed during the United Nations Millennium Forum.

On introducing gender perspectives in macroeconomics, NJWA underscores that amidst the globalization of the economy, destruction of the local economy due to the expansion of multinational corporations, increased unemployment by corporate restructuring and growth of non-regular employment have become serious problems. Women are the most vulnerable to such negative impacts. To ensure that globalization will be beneficial to the empowerment of women, NJWA calls for rights-based international rules to be established to regulate profit-oriented economic activity.

In 2004, the world witnessed abnormal weather and a massive natural disaster that hit various regions. The socially vulnerable, including children, women and the elderly, are affected most by the damage. We welcome the recent effort by governments to establish a reconstruction assistance system centred on United Nations efforts for the nations hit by the unprecedented tsunami disaster. We further call on governments to take concerted actions to address global warming and environmental destruction, which are said to be major causes of frequent disaster,

and to promote sustainable development and environment protection based on gender perspectives. We reiterate that resources should be invested not in war or armaments, but in the protection of lives and the environment.

NJWA urges the governments in this Commission to reaffirm their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of 2000, and to express their political will to promote implementation of the agreed goals.

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Statement submitted by Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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05-22706 (E) 020305

Building Sustainable Peace: Breaking the Cycle of Violence and Inequity

The December tsunamis have taken the scales from our eyes. It is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt, from the multiple crises they hurled at the world, that meeting critical human needs now and attending to the ravages to Earth are imperatives for all of us. Not just the needs of the homeless and devastated in South Asia, but the millions who die from the "tsunamis" of HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria that assail Africa and, indeed, all continents, each and every week; not just the devastation of coastlines in Asia, but the stripping of tropical and temperate forests, the pollution of land, air, and water, the wasting of the future by the hardships of poverty imposed by structural adjustment programs and market hyper-capitalism, and war: these are the woes that women must cry out with one voice to have addressed.

Five years into the 21st century, our concerns are graver than ever, as is the threat to global security in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001, with an endless "war on terror," escalation of militarism, nuclear proliferation, abandonment of major UN international treaties, corporatism, religious fundamentalism, and the extreme warning signs of global ecosystem collapse.

All of these disturbances reveal the scope of insecurities and complex emergencies facing humankind. But the tsunamis of 26 December 2004 in the Indian Ocean placed insecurity and chaotic patterns squarely in the global psyche. They must be addressed.

The violence, insecurity, and loss of human rights accompanying war, economic failure, ecological collapse, and failed states intensify the many concerns underlying the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Mid-term reviews and the present review process indicate that many of the recommendations addressing the dire concerns of women (especially the violence and threats women face in conflict) have not been adequately addressed and therefore must remain high on the global agenda.

The unacceptably slow pace of improvements and the partial breakdown of UN processes make it imperative to have overarching strategies to address the flawed paradigms and policies that prevail despite their failures. In order to advance social justice, democracy, and human rights, especially those of women, and to end the scourge of war, committed energetic leadership is required. A working paper for NGOs, Beijing + 10 Review: A Feminist Strategy for 2004-05 (prepared through a consultation process by the Center for Global Women's Leadership) states: "In order to move forward, feminists need to take back the initiative, re-insert patriarchy into the equation, and address the overarching challenges posed by neoliberal globalization, militarism, and fundamentalisms that threaten the gains made for women's rights." Certainly, women must take their place on the global stage to shape global governance and international agendas. For too many years empty promises and hollow exhortations have filled the diplomatic and political airways while the pathways to a better world remain a difficult road to traverse.

In the wake of the misery and destruction from the tsunamis, millions of people around the world are responding with compassion and generosity. This crisis is an opportunity for the world's leaders and civil society to discern the root causes of global insecurity and the need for a new approach.

Breaking the cycle of violence and inequity

It is time to reframe the way we see the world, to adopt systemic thinking, to empathize, to imagine what it is like to be in someone else's shoes, if they have them.

It is time to bring the new realities of an interrelated world into our view, and to make personal and professional decisions that will transmute failures into sustainable gains.

It is time for decisions making economic justice transcend injustice and equity. Iron-fisted global economics has been particularly unhelpful to women.

It is time for policies making ecological integrity supplant environmental devastation.

It is time for conversion of the pervasive culture of war into a culture of peace.

It is time to see global security as common security.

The emerging security concept of the "responsibility to protect", coupled with humanitarian intervention, remains grounded in military action and has been used in the past to justify violent military intervention. Thus, it can perpetuate the cycle of economic and military war that runs counter to attempts to move the world toward a culture of peace.

Common security more accurately reflects a UN perspective with its focus on peace, environment, and social justice, which are embodied in peace sustaining directives, including:

- to promote and fully guarantee respect for human rights, including the right to security, civil and political rights, and tolerance of difference;
- to ensure the preservation and protection of the environment, respecting the inherent worth of nature beyond human purpose, reducing the ecological footprint and moving away from the current model of over-consumptive development;
- to achieve a state of peace, justice and security;
- to reallocate the global military expenses to enable social justice;
- to guarantee labour rights, civil and political rights, social and cultural rights – right to food, right to housing, right to health care, right to education and social justice;
- to create a global structure that respects the rule of law and rights of citizens.

It is time to understand that human security on an Earth valued as our only habitat must claim resources that we cannot and must not waste on military expenditures and wars. Systems of institutionalized violence only intensify and entrench the human and environmental woes plaguing us. Peace advocates, feminists, and global civil society are voicing this reality more vigorously in the wake of the disastrous tsunamis. Policy recommendations representing major paradigm shifts in thinking are flooding the global policy stage.

This CSW must take note that the tsunamis in South Asia are a strong reminder that the global community has failed the South, and, as is so often the case when disaster strikes, those most affected are women and children. It is not that the UN has ignored the plight of the South, but rather that the member states of the UN have failed to comply and to implement the years of obligations and commitments made to the South and to women through the UN system.

Nations have recognized the urgency of the situation in the plethora of treaties, and conventions, and resolutions of the UN they have signed addressing issues related to equality, development, and peace -- the themes of the Beijing Conference. However, recognition without action is negligence.

It is time during Beijing +10- to renew commitment for compliance and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its related documents. Or should it

be left to women to meet the challenge? -- as millions of women are doing every day in the 21st century.

Recommendations:

1. We call for a renewed commitment to rid the world of homicidal weapons. The Political Declaration of this meeting should reinforce the "unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals" as agreed at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (2000). The nations of the world must move step-by-step to nuclear weapons abolition.

2. We call on the international system, including this Commission, to declare that under no circumstances should war be legal. The illegal and deliberate targeting of civilians, the unconscionable breadth and impact of the arms trade, the lethality of weapons, and the trauma and death of women and children in war and violent conflict make this imperative.

3. We call on CSW member states to request legal clarification of the self-defence provision in Article 51 of the UN Charter.

4. We call for new and renewed commitments to reduce military budgets in order to break the cycle of violence and respond to humankind's unprecedented cry for an end to war. At least as far back as back as 1972, governments recognized the urgency of reallocating the military budget and transferring the peace dividend to meeting human needs.

5. We call on all governments to create and employ institutional alternatives to armed conflict. Governments must take advantage of non-violent alternatives to armed action and provide a strong international system that includes laws, courts, and international police, with the assistance of experts within civil society, in particular women.

6. We call for the systematic inclusion of at least 40 per cent women and 40 per cent men in negotiating and implementing peace agreements to promote compliance with Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

7. We call on all governments to integrate peace and disarmament education into their systems of education at all levels of schooling, tertiary institutions, and teacher training programs.

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Statement presented by Madre, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

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Statement

1. Far from bringing security, prosperity and freedom as promised by George W. Bush, the US occupation of Iraq has fomented a human rights crisis for Iraqi women and families. US policy in Iraq violates international law and directly contradicts the letter and spirit of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

Freedom from Violence

2. Iraqi women cite ongoing warfare and a breakdown in security and public order as the number one problem in Iraq since the invasion. Between March 2003 and October 2004, US-led forces killed more than 100,000 Iraqis.[1] In November 2004, the US initiated a major assault on the city of Fallujah in which US soldiers displayed a disregard bordering on contempt for the lives of Iraqi civilians.

3. Social disintegration and political turmoil triggered by the overthrow of the Iraqi government has brought a sharp rise in gender-based violence, including abduction, rape and "honor killings". Girls are being kept out of school. In many areas, Islamic militants now patrol the streets, beating and harassing women who are not "properly" dressed or behaved. US occupation authorities bear direct responsibility for the rise of religious extremists. In July 2003, US Coalition Provisional Authority Chief Paul Bremer personally appointed reactionary Muslim clerics to the Iraqi Governing Council, knowingly empowering leaders with a stated commitment to restricting women's human rights.

4. US occupation authorities have failed to meet their legal obligations under the Hague Convention and the Forth Geneva Convention to provide security to Iraqi civilians.[2] US attacks on Iraqi civilians and US military treatment of Iraqi prisoners have systematically violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, and the UN Convention Against Torture.

The Right to Economic Security

5. The Bush Administration is transforming Iraq's centralized economy into a neo-liberal "free market" system.[3] Policies being implemented by the US, including the discredited Structural Adjustment Programs of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund; vast privatization of public services; and a trade regime heavily skewed to benefit US-based corporations, are widely acknowledged to increase poverty and inequality and undermine public health, sustainable development, workers' rights, education and political participation.

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[1] Les Roberts, et al. "Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey," *The Lancet*, October 29, 2004 (http://image.thelancet.com/extras/04art10342web.pdf).

[2] Article 43 of the Hague Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land obliges the occupying power to restore and maintain public order and safety; and Articles 29 and 47 of the Forth Geneva Convention oblige occupation authorities to respect the fundamental human rights of the inhabitants of the occupied territory.

[3] Antonia Juhasz, "Ambitions of Empire: The Bush Administration Economic Plan for Iraq," *LeftTurn Magazine*, Occupation Watch, January 20, 2004.

6. Iraqi women will bear the brunt of the extreme privatization being imposed by the US. Like women everywhere, Iraqi women are the majority of the poor who stand to lose access to critical social services in a "free-market" Iraq. As society's primary caretakers, Iraqi women will be forced to absorb the burden created by the elimination of public health care, education, housing, food subsidies, water services and other programs designed to meet the basic needs of the population.

7. International law, as outlined in the Hague Convention and the Hague Regulations, as well as the US Army's own Law of Land Warfare, make it illegal for the CPA to impose these fundamental changes on Iraq's economy.[4]

8. US policy in Iraq severely undermines the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including commitments to prevent and eliminate violence against women; promote sustainable development, which rests on a guarantee of women's human rights and the full and equal participation of women in development and decision-making processes; and the eradication of the "persistent and increasing burden of poverty of women" exacerbated by economic reforms such as SAPs and privatization. In fomenting human rights crises for women and families in Iraq and enabling a corporate takeover of Iraqi industries, the US occupation imposes a stiff barrier towards the achievement of each of the Millennium Development Goals.[5]

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[4] US economic policy in Iraq violates the Hague Convention and its annexed Regulations respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague Regulations) of 18 October 1907. The Hague Regulations state that an occupying power must respect "unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country." In September 2003, Bremer signed orders which called for the privatization of at least 200 Iraqi state companies, allowed for foreign investors to retain 100 percent ownership of Iraqi banks, mines and factories, and permitted foreign investors to pocket all of their profits without reinvesting in the reconstruction of Iraq. These measures directly contradict the Iraqi constitution which outlaws the privatization of key state assets and bars foreigners from owning Iraqi firms. Moreover, the US Army's Law of Land Warfare states that the occupying force "does not have the right of sale or unqualified use of [non-military] property."

[5] Namely: the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger (Goal 1); the achievement of universal primary education for boys and girls (Goal 2); the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (Goal 3); and a commitment to sustainable development (Goals 7 & 8).

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Statement presented by Widows Rights International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Invisibility of Widows in the Beijing Platform for Action

The Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, at this 49th CSW, provides a unique opportunity to raise awareness on the issues of **Widowhood.**

The Status of Widows is one of the most neglected areas of gender issues and its invisibility in the text of the **BPFA** and its **Outcome Document** reflects this neglect. Yet the abuse of **widows'** human rights and status cut across every one of the twelve action areas of the Plan.

Now, as never before in world history, the numbers of **widows**, as percentages of the female population in many countries, have risen unprecedentedly, due to armed conflict, ethnic cleansing, AIDs, natural disasters, child marriage, age disparities between marriage partners, and, in some regions, the reduced life expectancy of men.

In conflict-afflicted countries, for example, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Sudan (Darfur), it is estimated that almost half the female population are widows or wives of the missing.

Widows are of all ages, from children to the very old. In many developing countries the majority lives in extreme poverty and marginalisation, without legal rights and often exposed to mental, physical and sexual abuse and economic exploitation by their families and society generally.

Life-threatening and degrading mourning and burial rites, lack of rights to inheritance, land ownership, custody of children and cruelly restrictive lifestyles hamper widows' crucial roles as sole supporters of children, and other dependants, and as key contributors to social and economic development.

In spite of law reforms to comply with the **Beijing Platform** and the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** that theoretically provide for equality in inheritance laws and criminalise gender violence and harmful traditional practices, abuse of widows continues unabated across regions and cultures. **Widows** may have little access to the justice systems, and their lives are often determined by discriminatory and oppressive traditional and customary codes of law which conflict with human rights norms.

However, in spite of the acknowledged huge increase in the numbers of **widows** in many parts of the world, there has been no systematic attempt to gather statistics or undertake any situational analysis of **widowhood**. This is particularly needed in the context of reconstruction - whether reconstruction following conflict, or reconstruction in the wake of the Tsunami that has caused the deaths of thousands in Asia.

Furthermore, **Widows' needs (long-term as well as short-term) and roles** must be fully recognised in post-conflict scenarios where implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 is addressed.

The issues of **Widowhood** impact upon the whole of society. We know that poverty breeds conflict. One of the major root causes of the terrible poverty of millions of children following war is their mothers' widowhood and low status. The **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** cannot be achieved until the injustices of widowhood are remedied, and widows obtain their full legal and human rights.

We invite this Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session to ensure that the status of widows be prioritised as an "emerging issue" in the final documents, so that appropriate programmes can be established and the status of widows properly addressed.

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Statement presented by World Vision International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

In 2005 the United Nations will be reviewing the progress made and implementation of important outcomes of conferences such as the Fourth World Congress on Women (Beijing, 1995) and the UN Millennium Summit (2000). The Beijing Platform for Action outlined 12 Critical Areas required for women's empowerment and fulfilment of their rights. Furthermore, Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) deals with promoting gender equality and empowering women, with the target being to *eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015*.

It can be argued that all the eight MDGs should be viewed using a gender lens since issues such as poverty and hunger; universal primary education; child mortality; maternal health; HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; environmental sustainability; and global partnerships disproportionately affect girls and women.

In fact, when comparing the 12 Critical Areas of the Beijing Platform for Action with the MDGs, the overlap on the issues is staggering.

World Vision's recent publication entitled *Empowering Women and Girls: Challenges & Strategies in Gender Equality* clearly outlines four current challenges facing women and girls, namely HIV/AIDS, violence, armed conflict and trafficking. Violence against women and girls occurs in the home, school and community in the form of neglect, infanticide, prenatal selection, harmful traditional practices such as FGM and sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, too often the perpetrator is a family member who is supposed to nurture and protect. According to UNAIDS, up to 50 per cent of those who report physical abuse report that the perpetrator was an intimate partner.[1] About one in three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused during her lifetime, while 40-58 per cent of assaults are against girls who are under 15 years old.[2] World Vision welcomes the progress of the *Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children*, which indicates that there have been or will be national, regional and international consultations addressing violence in the home, school and community.

HIV/AIDS continues to ravage the lives of women and girls, who in most areas are infected and affected disproportionately to men. UNICEF's report, *The State of the World's Children, 2005* reports the startling figure that women aged 15-24 in sub-Saharan Africa make up 75 per cent of the infected population.[3] Stigmatisation and ostracism continue to be major challenges. According to UNAIDS/WHO *AIDS Epidemic Update of December 2004*, 17.6 million women (15-49 years old) are living with HIV/AIDS. UNICEF, UNAIDS and WHO statistics show that young women (15-24 years) comprise 62 per cent of the young people living with HIV/AIDS.[4] World Vision has committed resources, technical expertise and put strategies in place through it's innovative *Hope Initiative*, which has three principal components: prevention, care and support, and advocacy. *World Vision*

[1] http://www.unaids.org/html/pub/topics/gender/genderbasedviolence_en_pdf.pdf

[2] http://www.womensedge.org/pages/referencematerials/reference_material.jsp?id=67

[3] http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2005_(English).pdf

[4] http://www.unfpa.org/adolescents/facts.htm

invests $200 million a year in the 30 worst hit countries by HIV/AIDS.[5] Other major health issues that require urgent attention are the need to reduce maternal and child mortality rates and malaria, which accounts for nearly 50 per cent of causes of death in sub-Saharan Africa.

World Vision is concerned and continues to address the trafficking of women and girls. Psychological, emotional and physical damage occurs especially to young girls who are trafficked into sexual exploitation. World Vision has been instrumental in collaborating with government law enforcement agencies to put laws, policies and structures in place to prosecute those who traffic women and girls. Capacity-building of the police and cooperation through transnational agreements has been effective, yet more needs to be done to curtail the trafficking of women and girls. The International Organisation for Migration estimates that between 700,000 to 2 million women are trafficked across international borders annually.[6] World Vision acknowledges the creation of the mandate of a United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children at the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, and looks forward to collaborating with the Special Rapporteur.

Armed conflict exposes girls, and women to gender-based violence, torture, killing, maiming, abduction and other egregious crimes against humanity. They have been forced to leave their home and land to reside in either IDP or refugee camps. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates there are 21.4 million refugees, while women and children comprise 80 per cent of the world's refugees.[7] World Vision has pioneered the *Do No Harm and Local Capacities for Peace* initiative Framework. *The framework provides a method of analysis that assists NGOs toward achieving the goal of doing no harm while providing aid and helping NGOs to recognize and support the people's local capacities for peace.*[8]

Furthermore, World Vision makes the following recommendations[9] to the Governments, NGOs and United Nations agencies involved in the forty-ninth session of the CSW:

1. Learn from, duplicate and provide resources for a three-pronged approach to addressing HIV/AIDS

   a. *Prevention — targeting children 5-15 years of age, high-risk groups, pregnant and lactating mothers*

   b. *Care and support — for orphans and vulnerable children (including their parents and care-givers) and PLWHA in a community*

[5] Casey K, Amayun MB, 2002, *World Vision's hope initiative: A global NGO responds to a global crisis*, 14th International AIDS Conference, Barcelona, Spain July 7-12 2002.

[6] IOM Quarterly Bulletin, No. 23, 2001, http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/266_filename_Trafficking.pdf

[7] http://www.unfpa.org/intercenter/beijing/armed.htm

[8] World Vision CEO Briefing Number 44, Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) Bill Lowrey, Coordinator for Reconciliation and Peacebuilding.

[9] Further details on recommendations are available from: World Vision International, Empowering Women and Girls: Challenges and Strategies in Gender Equality, 2005, www.globalempowerment.org.

e. Advocacy — for policies and programs that will minimize HIV/AIDS transmission and provide maximum care for all affected by HIV/AIDS

2. Actively address the issue of domestic violence, both in relation to international legislation and policies, and provide incentives and resources to research and set up databases for sufficient mapping of the problem as well as programmatic interventions

3. Ensure international, national and regional reinforcement of laws and implementation of policies to address the issue of trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation and put more effective mechanisms to punish traffickers and exploiters, whilst protecting victims through appropriate immigration laws and policies

4. Address the feminization of poverty and its relation to violence against women and girls through institutional mechanisms, provision of resources, technical expertise and local initiatives

5. Address the root causes of female infanticide and foeticide that has lead to the death of millions of girls; and implement policies and measures that rectify the low status of women and girls in patriarchal societies

6. Grant sufficient budgets to the Government ministry or department responsible for gender and children which in some countries receives the smallest budget in comparison to other ministries; as well as support organizations working directly or in collaboration with communities on women's and girls issues

7. Determine feasible mechanisms, enforcement measures and implementation of policies to address the impunity of violators of women's and girl's rights especially in situations of armed conflict

8. Involve women in decision-making during peace negotiations and the political process at the national, regional and international levels which is crucial for the protection of women and girls from violence and other violations of their rights

9. Collaborate and coordinate with religious leaders, faith-based organizations (FBOs), local NGOs and men in designing the action plans and strategies, as well as long-term implementation, in order to combat violence against women and children; child trafficking; peaceful solutions to armed conflicts and prevention, care, support and advocacy for those affected and infected by HIV/AIDS

10. Aim to eradicate harmful traditional practices against women and girls such as female infanticide and female genital mutilation (in the case of FGM provide alternative rites of passage which embrace positive cultural coming of age ceremonies without the mutilation of the girl child)

11. Support women and girls with educational opportunities, information and knowledge critical to understanding their rights and having the autonomy to demand those rights; for instance, this could include insuring that both primary and secondary education is accessible and of good quality for boys and girls through the provision of incentives to encourage parents to send their children to school, such as scholarships and a safe environment

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Statement presented by General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Statement

"Women hold up half the sky" was an often-quoted saying at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. This Chinese saying has a great deal of truth as women make up about half the world population. But as those who work with women know, getting support for these women who hold up the sky is not easy. It is something that we must work together on or all of us will soon be crying, "The sky is falling; the sky is falling!"

Not only do women—and the girls who will soon be women—need support, but they need empowerment so that they can better solve their own challenges; and women can best solve most of those challenges themselves. To be able to do this they need the help of all organizations, such as the United Nations, NGOs, churches and religious organizations, and governments. The rewards in improved quality of life for all people will make it well worth the effort.

One of the challenges facing women is education. This ranges from the most basic ability to read and write, and the opportunity to stay in school, to having access to advanced education, including education in the issues of life women face. It has been shown that:

* Educated women have fewer children
* Educated women marry later
* Educated women have decreased maternal mortality
* An educated wife and mother results in improved family health
* Education leads to decreased infant mortality
* Educated women have a greater sense of personal self-worth
* Educated women have increased earning capacity and productivity
* Children of educated mothers do better in school
* Educated women are better able to instill high moral values in their children

It is for this reason that the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, particularly through its Department of Women's Ministries, and through other Church entities as well, has developed programs to benefit women and the girl child.

Literacy

Female illiteracy is linked to low social status and poverty. Limited access to knowledge and female illiteracy have been shown by UNICEF to be powerful correlates of infant and child mortality. Illiteracy costs governments and businesses money. While not all illiterates are women, most are.

* In the United States of America each year, businesses hire one million new workers who cannot read, write, or count. During the time it takes to teach them, their employers lose $30-45 billion in productivity.
* Currently, 30% of all large US companies offer remedial education. Over the next decade, that figure will climb to 65%.

So what do we do about this? We can begin with the children. We must generate an environment for literacy, for education of girls and women. We must educate fathers and husbands to the benefits of allowing girls to gain the maximum education and help them realize the improved potential of an educated wife and mother. We must then find ways to help women who seemingly have missed the opportunity for education to make up for lost time.

For these reasons, the Adventist Church supports one of the largest education programs around the world, offering equal education to boys and girls. An atmosphere of education is promoted in the churches. And Women's Ministries has a scholarship program specifically for women, most of whom live in what are referred to as developing nations.

The Church also has literacy programs in many parts of the world: Cambodia, the Philippines, India, Brazil, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Togo, Rwanda, South Africa, and the United States, to name a few. After receiving the benefit of these programs, women have said things such as "I feel like I was blind and now I can see." "Now my grandchildren will not think I am ignorant." "Now the businesses and bosses will not be able to cheat me any more. I can read and write."

Health

The problem of HIV/AIDS and its effect on women around the world is too staggering to be ignored. According to the World Health Organization, 19.2 million women were living with HIV/AIDS in 2002. One of the problems we face is educating women about the truth and myths regarding HIV/AIDS. As a result of this, the Adventist Church's Women's Ministries Department has produced materials specifically for education. The material, titled "Truth or Consequence: The Story of HIV/AIDS" has been made available to all our world offices as a flip chart for use with small groups, as a PowerPoint presentation, and also as overheads. This material can easily be translated and made available.

Our challenge is to educate women in as many ways as possible on this subject. When we work together, this can be achieved.

Abuse

In October 2002, the Adventist Church—in its Annual Council—voted that the 4th Saturday of August each year be designated as Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day. Several departments at the church world headquarters come together each year to prepare new material that is sent to every Adventist church around the world via the Women's Ministries Department.

Packets have been created that educate women on various topics targeting the perpetrator, the victim, children, and support persons.

Leadership Training

The Adventist Church believes that part of empowering women includes preparation for leadership positions. As a result in 2002 Women's Ministries created a Leadership Certification course that covers three levels and includes 56 seminars over a three-year period. Topics range from effective leadership to professionalism; and include seminars on parliamentary procedure, assessing needs, and finding or developing community resources. This material is appropriate for use with young women as well as more mature women.

All of this leads to empowerment. A woman who has been educated is resourceful, is aware of her rights and how to maintain or gain these rights, and thus realizes she has something to contribute to her family, her community, her church, and her government.

As a faith-based organization, we also believe that empowerment includes a woman's right to choose her own religion. She needs to be educated so that she can make an informed decision, and then be given the right by her family, community and governmental laws to follow her own convictions.

Challenge

As a faith community representing more than 25 million people in 205 countries, the Adventist Church wholeheartedly supports all efforts to improve the quality of life of women in the categories mentioned above, and it will continue to actively work through its congregations, institutions, and organizations to collaboratively achieve these objectives.

Our challenge to the United Nations, NGO's, and other representatives present here today is to develop concrete action plans for empowering today's women and girls and to work in partnerships with local governments and institutions.

Our challenge to you, participant in this conference, is to work together to put aside our religious and racial differences and work towards the common goal of improving the lives of women and girls around the world.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls

Statement presented by Global Alliance for Women's Health, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

The emerging problem of diabetes is a current and growing challenge for the "advancement and empowerment of women and girls." Based on the Platform for Action Strategic objective C.4 para.109.(d), which looks at the "...the impact of gender and age inequalities, especially with respect to chronic and non-communicable diseases...," we are asking the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to recognize diabetes as a chronic disease that currently challenges the "advancement and empowerment of women and girls."

Over the past 20 years, diabetes has been growing into a global epidemic both in developed and developing countries, with women being disproportionately at risk. The projections for diabetes prevalence are staggering.

- Currently, about 194 million people have diabetes worldwide, and this number is expected to grow to 333 million by 2025.[1]
- In developing countries, there is a projected 170% increase in diabetes prevalence, and in developed countries, there is an expected 42% increase.[2]
- This explosion of diabetes acutely affects women; in 1995, 73 million women had diabetes as compared with 62 million men, worldwide.[3] If this disparity continues, 180 million women will have diabetes by 2025.
- In developed countries, people without diabetes have shown a decrease in heart disease, and even men with diabetes have shown a 13% decrease in heart disease. However, women with diabetes have actually seen a 23% increase in cardiovascular disease.[4]

Moreover, women, as the primary caregivers, will have the burden of caring for those suffering from diabetes and its complications. Along with heart disease, these complications can include circulatory problems such as stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and amputation.

With this in mind, GAWH has launched the advocacy campaign: "Women and the Emerging Diabetes Epidemic." As part of this campaign, the GAWH is initiating a network of worldwide NGOs to disseminate information on the epidemic of diabetes.

GAWH is calling on the United Nations, the World Health Organization, UNFPA and UNDP to recognize diabetes as an emerging epidemic and to develop forward-looking policies that not only address this growing health crisis but also take on the epidemic of diabetes from a gender perspective.

The Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women underscored the idea of gender equality into the dialogue of women's issues. As we assess and appraise the Platform for Action, the Global Alliance for Women's Health urges the Commission on the Status Women to recognize that without a special focus on the health needs of women, the "advancement and empowerment of women and girls" is seriously undermined. GAWH believes that with a proactive gender-focused approach and the cooperation of the international community, the growing epidemic of diabetes can be quelled.

[1] http://www.idf.org/home/index.cfm?printpage=1&node=264
[2] http://www.idf.org/home/index.cfm?node=37
[3] http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2002/WHO_NMH_02.01.pdf
[4] http://www.idf.org/home/index.cfm?node=37